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SERMON DX.

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RELIGION IN BUSINESS.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."
Romans 12: 11.

THE revival of business is now the common topic of conversation with business men. There is no more complaining of "a dull season," of "nothing doing;" but every sort of business is active, and there is promise of a season of unusual prosperity. For one, I am glad of it. As a Christian minister I rejoice in it; for dull times in business are apt to be dull times in everything. Though in a season of general distress, many may turn their thoughts to religion and eternal things, yet it is in a time of general prosperity that the cause of Christ, as a whole, moves forward. Then it is that men build churches, schools and colleges, plant missions, send forth evangelists, distribute freely the Word of God, in short, push forward with vigor all the enterprises of benevolence. The opening of a railroad through a certain county in Massachusetts wiped off some half-a-dozen churches from the list of beneficiaries of the Home Missionary Society. It revived business; it brought trade and money to the doors of the people, and thus gave them the means of supporting the institutions of the gospel. The same process is going forward in other States, both north and west. Religion has an interest in the railroad, the canal, the factory, the mine, the ship, the steamboat, the machine, the plow, the anvil, and the loom. Where the fruits of industry and commerce most abound, there religion may look for her largest tribute; as also, in turn, where religion is best sustained, there the arts and occupations of civilized life are most flourishing. Therefore let not Christians look upon the reviving of business as of course a hindrance to the reviving of religion, nor feel that nothing can be done to revive religion in a busy season. Let them not

set religion in opposition to all the temporal interests of men; neither let them separate their own business from their religion, and attempt to carry each forward at intervals only, and distinct from the other. While we congratulate our fellow-citizens on the revival of business, let us turn their thoughts to the higher blessing of the reviving of religion; making the return of temporal prosperity the occasion of gratitude to God and of renewed activity in His service. In so doing, we shall carry out the spirit of the apostolic precept in our text.

I am aware that some understand by 'business' here, *the work of Christ*,—referring the exhortation to "religious activity," rather than to "the active performance of our several vocations." The word translated "business" means, properly, *haste, zeal, activity, diligence*; and hence it comes, very naturally, to denote *industry, labor*. The meaning of the apostle may then be expressed as follows: As to diligence, activity, labor, do not be remiss or slothful,—do not grow weary or indolent. Thus taken, it is a *general* precept, corresponding with that given in Ecclesiastes 9: 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." In this view of the text, we may say with Dr. Chalmers, "Whether we retain the word business, or render it into any other of the relative terms, there is no mistaking the sense of this first clause, which is not to be slothful but diligent; and that whatever the business may be, if an expedient and a lawful one. The question whether it be a sacred or secular employment which is here referred to, will not embarrass him whose honest aim is to leaven with the spirit of the gospel every hour of his life, and every work which he puts his hand to. The man who studies to observe 'all things whatsoever' Christ hath commanded him, will still feel himself religiously employed when following the precept—'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' He will see no difficulty in making the advice here given to be of universal application, who aspires to a conformity with the sayings—'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;' 'Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.'"

We may therefore apply the text, at least in its spirit, to secular business. Not only in the work of the ministry, not only in labors of brotherly love or of benevolence toward mankind, but in the daily vocations of life, in our every-day business, we are to be "not slothful" but diligent.

In order to a full development of this idea, I remark,

1. The Christian religion favors activity and diligence in business. In this remark it is implied, of course, that the business is in itself lawful; not lawful merely according to the statute-book of the state or the code of commerce, but lawful according to the

great moral law of benevolence which extends to all the conduct and relations of life.

A business whose direct tendency is to injure the community, in property, health, or morals, like the sale of intoxicating drinks, though it may be licensed by the civil authority, is in violation of the law of love, and is therefore an *unlawful* business. There is no commendation of such business in the Word of God; no exhortation to faithfulness and diligence therein; but, on the contrary, the curse of God is upon it and its gains. "Wo to him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken; . . . the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned to thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory." The very house built by such gains is accursed. "For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it; wo to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!" Any business which tends to injure mankind is unlawful, and is disallowed of God. But whatever business is of a useful tendency, whatever contributes in any way to the well-being of mankind—physically, intellectually, socially, or morally—that it is not only lawful for us to engage in, but being engaged in it, we are commanded to follow it with diligence. The scriptural rule is, that every man shall have some useful occupation, and that he shall be industrious in his calling.

Paul, in his letters to the Thessalonians, says: "We beseech you, brethren,—that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." And again: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." He then refers to his own example. Though he might have called upon them to support him while he was laboring for their good, yet for example's sake he "did not eat any man's bread for naught, but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that he might not be chargeable to any." The Bible nowhere tolerates laziness. Both the Old Testament and the New abound in exhortations to diligence. The book of Proverbs is a manual of industry. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise." "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." Christ condemns sloth in his own service, as in the sentence of

the wicked and slothful servant in the parable of the talents : He was ever active in doing good, and doubtless, before entering on his public ministry, was industrious in his sphere as the carpenter's son. Paul labored at his trade of tent-making while in Ephesus, ministering to his necessities with his own hands ; and he exhorts the Ephesians to labor, working with their own hands, in some good and useful occupation.

Thus much for the teachings of Scripture upon this point. Idleness is utterly discountenanced. It is condemned as a sin. The Christian religion enjoins industry and diligence in our secular concerns.

What Christianity thus enjoins by positive precept, it favors also by its influence, direct or indirect, in various ways. On this point, it has been well observed, that religion "draws off the mind from those pleasures and pursuits which generate and promote indolence." Vain, frivolous, and vicious amusements are not only forbidden by the spirit and precepts of the gospel, but are superseded by those higher occupations with which it fills the mind. The pursuits of Idleness,—if that be not a contradiction in terms,—are foreign to the temper of the Christian. He has no relish for them. He can take no satisfaction in idling away his time. One can hardly conceive of such a character as a *Christian loafer*,—a devout, God-fearing idler. One of the first fruits of the gospel among a people who have been living in idleness and wantonness, is industry. When once a man realizes that he is immortal, he is no longer content to live like a beast ; he forsakes the filthy hut for the neat cottage ; he gives up his roving, reckless manner of life, for the quiet occupations of husbandry, or for some mechanic art, or for the more active pursuits of trade and commerce. The thought that he is to live hereafter, leads him to set a higher value on the present life. He no longer walks in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries. The idler, the spendthrift, the prodigal, is transformed into a sober and industrious man, through the power of the gospel. Those who have watched the progress of civilization in connection with missionary labor at the Sandwich Islands, or among our own aborigines, will need no further argument or illustration on this point. The progress of Christianity is the progress of man in physical comfort and social refinement. The gospel makes the desert bloom, and covers the wilderness with gladness and plenty.

Again ; the Christian religion by holding forth the great idea of the renovation of the world, demands of all who embrace it, the active improvement of time. The Christian religion contemplates man in a state of degradation ;—the world in ruins. Its office is to bring man out of that state ; to build up those ruins. And in order to this, the whole fabric of society must be penetrated by its influence, and if need be, molded anew. Not only

barbarism, but civilization itself must be Christianized. The masses must be reached; the poor must be clothed, and fed, and comforted; the ignorant must be instructed, the vicious reclaimed; political economy, civil government, every social institution must be brought under the control of the law of love. Christianity does not have to do merely with the souls of men; with their spiritual interests alone. It cares for these first and most of all, but it cares for men's bodies also—for their temporal well-being. It seeks to do away with poverty, with oppression, with wrong, with all unjust and unnatural distinctions, with every social and moral evil, from the face of the earth. And he who embraces Christianity finds himself enlisted for life in that work. It is a great work. To do his part of it, every Christian must be diligent in his calling, that so far as that contributes to the improvement and happiness of mankind, he may do good therein; he must be diligent in business, that he may thus gain the means of usefulness in other modes; he must be diligent in business, that he may gain time for engaging directly in acts of benevolence. Jesus felt that he had a work to do. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" So the Christian feels that he has a work to do for Christ and for the world, which calls upon him to be diligent in all things—to lead a life of laborious and unceasing activity.

This requirement reaches Christians of all classes and in all circumstances. The pious female dispenses comfort and happiness to her household; but she does not limit her affections or her zeal by the circle of home. Dorcas-like, she plies her needle upon garments for the poor, or she goes forth on errands of sympathy and relief, to the dwellings of the needy and the sorrowing; and to gain time for these labors, she is diligent in her own affairs. Both in the daily routine of household duties and in the various offices of kindness to others, the desire to be useful and to honor Christ in her appointed sphere, quickens every movement, graces every labor, lightens every care.

Again, the Christian religion promotes industry, by impressing the mind with a deep conviction of the value of time. The Christian, at the moment of conversion, starts with this feeling: I have wasted thus much of life; I have lost years on years of precious time; and now I must go to work to redeem it. The time past of my life must suffice for worldliness, self-seeking, folly, sin; I now have something to live for, and I must not live any longer to myself—it is high time to awake out of sleep.

With this feeling he becomes conscientious in the use of time. He has none to waste; he takes the time needed for sleep as a matter of duty; he takes the time necessary for relaxation, for social visiting and enjoyment, for the amenities of life, as a matter of principle, that he may be refreshed, and have health and vigor

for life's great work. But he does not seek amusement, or lie idle, for want of something to do, or because he feels that he has time to spare. "Time is money," to the man of business; to the Christian it is more—it is growth in holiness; it is works of benevolence; it is the salvation of souls; it is the conquest of the world, for Christ; it is an immortal crown. He who attaches such a value to time can never be remiss, can never be idle.

But it may be said that though the Christian religion in these ways commends and favors industry, it yet interferes with the business of life, by the frequency of religious observances, by drawing men away from business to religious meetings, and by appropriating one-seventh part of time to that use alone.

But if we compare the Christian religion in this respect with any other, or with irreligion, we shall see that the objection has no force. If you will take the pains to reckon up the number of festivals and other religious days, among the Greeks and Romans, days on which men were drawn aside from the ordinary pursuits of life, by religious observances, you will find, I think, that more than half the year was thus appropriated. The same is true of some pagan nations, to this day. And in Roman Catholic countries, where Christianity is corrupted till it is little more than a baptized paganism, you will find perhaps two-thirds of the year, or four days out of six, appropriated to religious ceremonies. When Atheism had sway in France, it was not much better; the fête took the place of the holy-day, and the decade of the Sabbath. The Jewish system, though of Divine origin, demanded a much larger proportion of time for religious observances than the Christian. In this respect, therefore, the world has gained greatly by the introduction of Christianity, and must gain wherever a pure Christianity prevails. The reason of this is, that Judaism, Romanism, and Paganism, are all alike ritual, ceremonial systems. Under those systems, men are to be saved by rites and ceremonies, and so the more of them the better. But Christianity is a spiritual system; men are saved under it by faith and holy living. It has but one sacred day—the Sabbath, and that not ceremonially, but morally sacred. All other observances are voluntary.

Now, as to the effect of the Sabbath on industry, let facts speak. These show us that both man and beast need this stated season of rest, and can do more work with it in six days, than without it in seven. It is a benevolent and an economical provision. Where the Sabbath is observed, individuals, the community, the nation, are more thrifty and prosperous than where it is not observed. The Sabbath strengthens good habits. It does not, when religiously observed, encourage idleness and vice, or leave any of those demoralizing influences that follow in the train of a pagan festival. The Sabbath is the great regulator of human industry; the balance-wheel in a well ordered political economy. Under

every aspect, then, the Christian religion is found to favor industry. By precept, by motives and influences, direct and indirect, and by its own positive institutions.

In accordance with this, was the greeting of the apostle John to the beloved Gaius. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." So far from regarding temporal prosperity as necessarily adverse to religion, he wished that his friend might be as prosperous in his temporal affairs and in bodily health, as he was in his soul.

But while religion thus favors industry, it would infuse into all the business of life the leaven of piety. Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. The fervor here spoken of is not necessarily a religious, or devotional fervor, but an earnestness such as an ardent mind brings to any object upon which it is intent. Do not be slothful, but warmly engaged, fervid, active in what is before you. Do the business of the hour, whatever it may be, in serious earnest, and that as a part of the great work of life. "Let each hour be busily filled up with its own proper employment," and that, in subordination to the will of the master whom you serve. Let all the business of life be conducted as a part of your Christian duty, not as distinct from it; but in the spirit of Christianity, in obedience to the commands of God; for the glory of your Saviour; for the good of mankind. This comprehensive precept is given in other forms. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." . . . "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men." "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." That is the rule of the Christian life. To some it may seem hard to be understood, and almost impossible to be obeyed. Yet nothing can be plainer, for nothing is more common among men, than to have some one governing motive, some ruling purpose, running through all their conduct, shaping all their plans, and influencing all their actions.

The father toils year after year to provide for his family; perhaps goes to some distant region, or foreign land, and there amid hardships and privations, digs and delves, or buys and sells, that he may lay up something for the comfort of the dear ones at home. They are not momentarily in his thoughts; his mind is occupied with business, and he carries on the details of business just as other men. Yet there is in his soul a deep spring of action unknown to the youthful adventurer, who labors at his side. When prospered, he rejoices for their sakes who are far away; when unsuccessful, his sorrow is deepened on their account; when weary

and almost disheartened, he thinks of them, and his spirits rally and his strength returns. Thus is he ever acting, not mechanically nor from impulse, but from one fixed motive, a motive which does not lie upon the surface, but is deeper and stronger even than the love of gain.

Another, under *that* sordid motive, will transmute the very virtues of social life into ministers of avarice.

A third, moved by a more generous passion, will make every plan and action of his life subordinate to its gratification. Thus the hero of romance and often the hero of real life, who for lack of fortune or fame, is denied the hand of her he loves, will traverse seas and continents, make any sacrifice, meet any danger, undergo any privation, perform prodigies of labor or valor, and even hazard life itself, to secure his end. In these and a thousand other instances, men know what it is to act under one ruling motive, which gives color and direction to all that they do, even when it is not apparent to others, and even at times when they themselves are not distinctly conscious of it. So should it be with the Christian; the one grand absorbing object of his life should be to serve the Lord. With a view to this, not his religious exercises merely, but his daily business should be conducted. He should leaven that with the spirit of the gospel.

How this is done may be best learned by illustration. A minister goes into his study in a prayerful spirit, to prepare a discourse for the pulpit. His great desire is to bring the Word of God before the minds of his hearers with distinctness and power. In order to get at the full meaning and spirit of his chosen text, he studies it critically in the original tongue. Wishing to avail himself of the help of German scholarship and criticism, he studies also the German language. If while he is thus engaged, a friend should enter his study and ask him why he is studying German, he might answer truly, "to save souls." But how so? Does he expect to preach in German? No. But by consulting the Biblical scholars and grammarians of a country pre-eminent in Biblical criticism, he hopes to get a clearer insight into the meaning of his text, and thus to exhibit more clearly and convincingly the truth as it is in Jesus. A minister may be intent upon the salvation of souls, while turning over the leaves of a Greek or German lexicon.

The young student who has devoted himself in heart to the missionary work, in studying each lesson during his long preparatory course, is doing what he can for the glory of Christ and the salvation of the heathen. He may not reflect that each lesson is designed to fit him for his chosen work; other local and temporary influences may contribute to make him studious; but after all, the mainspring of his every-day diligence in study is the work which he has in view at the close of his course.

The merchant, whose mind is intent on the advancement of Christ's kingdom is not merely selling cotton cloth and calico, all the day long, but in doing that—if that is his business—besides providing for his own support and that of his family, giving employment to others, and contributing to the general welfare of society, he is also sustaining a church, supporting a missionary, or a colporteur, founding a college, doing whatever the avails of that business shall do to promote Christ's kingdom.

A compositor or a pressman in the Bible-house may work merely for his daily bread; and it may be to him a matter of indifference whether he prints the Bible or Paine's Age of Reason. But if he is living for Christ, it will be a matter of great satisfaction to him, that while laboring for his daily bread, he is also contributing to multiply copies of the Word of God. And in like manner any lawful and useful occupation may be pursued as a religious duty, and with constant reference to the glory of God, though it may be simply mechanical and may terminate wholly in physical effects.

A minister calling early one morning on a parishioner, a currier by trade, the latter apologized for being in his working dress. "May I be found so," replied the minister, "when the Master shall come for me." "What!" exclaimed the other, "in such a filthy dress?" "When Christ comes," rejoined the pastor, "may I be found about my business."

In view of the subject I remark: 1. That the Christian who makes his attention to business a pretext for inattention to the duties of religion, takes a wrong view both of business and religion, and sets against each other things that were meant to be in harmony. True, indeed, it is, sadly true, that worldly employments often, perhaps commonly, draw off the mind from God. Sometimes this is owing to the nature of the employment; but it is often the case where the business is lawful, because it is looked upon as a thing distinct from the service of God, a sort of necessary bondage to the world, or a necessary temptation and discipline. And even those who aim to *do* business on Christian principles, do not always regard the *the doing* of business as itself a duty to be performed in its own time and place, for the glory of God, as truly as the duty of prayer. "The right discharge of our duties in the various employments of life, is to be regarded as serving God. He has arranged the order of things in this life to promote industry; he has made industry essential to happiness and success. He has *required* that all our employments should be conducted with reference to his will and to his honor." He who so conducts his business will not find it a hindrance to piety, and will be relieved of the painful strife between the claims of business and the claims of God.

2. In a time of general prosperity, we should seek the reviving of religion. It is a common saying, and a more common feeling, that nothing can be done for reviving religion in a *busy* season. Is this so? Has God subjected us to temporal necessities and laws which conflict with our spiritual welfare? The farmer at certain seasons must be engaged in husbanding his crops; is this incompatible with the due performance of religious duties? Is there any such necessary conflict between the temporal and the spiritual? Viewing the busy season as a temptation, you should resolve that you will not be drawn off from God. But why not regard your increasing prosperity with gratitude as sent from God, and make it a new incentive to activity in His service? Do not bargain with conscience to serve the world so hard, and so long, with the promise of serving God when you shall have nothing else to do. Let others see that in being diligent in business you are working for God. Do not conduct your business on selfish principles; and while you are making money, give, *give*, give, as God prospers you.

3. Men of the world may understand what we mean when we call upon them to give up the world and become Christians. We do not ask them to give up their business, unless that business is an immoral and unlawful one. We do not ask them to be any less industrious and thrifty. But we show them how they may subordinate their business to a higher end; and instead of toiling for self and pelf, may labor for an object that shall last forever. We show them how they may ennoble life, and enjoy it, and link it to heaven besides. What is it to make money? For whom do you make it? What shall it profit you, to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? Oh, live to do good! live for God—then shall you live forever, and when you are gone hence, your works shall follow you in lines of fadeless glory to the skies.

SERMON DXI.

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THIS LIFE MAN'S SEASON OF PROBATION FOR ETERNITY.

"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—2 Cor. 5 : 10.

THIS life is man's season of probation for eternity. That this doctrine is taught by the apostle in my text, is evident. He uses the term "in the body," to signify continuance in the present life. He says: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." He esteemed it desirable that his present life should terminate, because then he should enter heaven to enjoy the beatific presence of Christ. But he believed that to be prepared for that enjoyment, he must continue to be faithful in his sacred calling. "Wherefore," he says, "we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." He then expresses the same sentiment in a general proposition: "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." All must appear before Christ to be judged; and those who shall have done good, or obeyed the gospel in their life-time, will be accepted; but those who shall have done evil, or disobeyed the gospel in their life-time, will be condemned. An additional evidence that the apostle meant here to teach that this life is man's season of probation for eternity, is given in the words which he subjoined, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." That this life is a season of probation for eternity, is confirmed by the following considerations:—

I. Man's *nature* is adapted to such a state of probation. He is a moral agent. He is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, and of choosing or refusing. When the law of God

is clearly exhibited to the mind of man, his conscience approves of it, and he is convinced that he ought to obey it. When he transgresses it, he is conscious that he does wrong, that he renders himself blameworthy, and that he ought to have rendered obedience. Or when the gospel is intelligibly presented to him, he cannot do otherwise than assent to it as being worthy of acceptance. He is conscious that he ought to accede to its terms, and gratefully accept the great salvation. Man has not only ability to act as a moral agent, but he is susceptible of retribution. He is a proper subject for reward or punishment. He is conscious that he ought not to be accepted and rewarded unless he does right; and that he deserves to be condemned and punished when he commits sin.

Man's nature, therefore, is adapted to a state of probation. He has ability and capacity to do right, and receive reward; or to do wrong, and receive punishment. Since, moreover, man is an immortal being, he is by nature adapted to be in this life a probationer for eternity. According to the character which he forms here, whether holy or sinful, he will be fitted either for a state of happiness or misery in eternity.

II. Man's *condition* in this life is adapted to a state of probation for eternity. He has opportunity to do good or to do evil. He may exercise in his heart and manifest in his life, benevolence or selfishness, love or hatred, faith or unbelief, piety or impiety, obedience to God or rebellion against him. He not only has, as before stated, ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and a consciousness that he ought to obey the law of God, and accede to the terms of the gospel; but such is the condition in which he is placed that he is of necessity constantly deciding the question whether he will obey or disobey, accede or refuse. I now speak of the condition of man while he has a knowledge of the Scriptures. He knows what his duty is to God, his fellow-man and himself. Motives are presented to induce him to do his duty. At the same time his heart is tried by temptations. In this condition he cannot suspend his moral agency. He must voluntarily conform to the rule of moral rectitude, or voluntarily act in violation of it. If he is a sinner he must either repent, or persist in transgression; he must obey the gospel in the exercise of faith, or continue in unbelief; he must yield to the authority and espouse the cause of Christ, and stand with him, or continue to resist his authority and oppose his cause. Thus every person upon whom the light of revelation shines is forming a moral character, either holy or sinful; is laying up a treasure either of heavenly blessedness with the saints in light, or of wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Nor are those only who have the Scriptures in a condition which is adapted to

a probationary state : " for," says the apostle, " when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves ; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another." Accordingly, moral obligation rests upon the pagan world, and they are constantly forming a character as probationers for eternity.

III. The comparisons by which the Scriptures represent this life, plainly teach that it is a season of probation for eternity. This life is compared to seed time. " Be not deceived," says the apostle, " God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." In this life men sow their different kinds of seed. Some sow to the flesh. They occupy their time and talents in gratifying the carnal mind. They are caterers to the selfishness, pride, covetousness, or licentiousness of their own hearts. Their harvest time will come ; and as they have sowed to the flesh, they will of the flesh reap corruption. Their portion will be the wages of sin—the second death. Others sow to the Spirit. They occupy their time and talents according to the dictates and under the influence of the Spirit of grace. They too will have a harvest. They will of the Spirit reap life everlasting. As during the appropriate season, the seed is sown, springs up, and is matured for the harvest ; so, during this life, man forms his character as a probationer for the final judgment,—that harvest which will be at the end of the world, and the consequences of which will be the retributions of eternity.

Of similar import are the parables of the ten virgins and that of the talents. When the virgins were called to go out to meet the bridegroom, the wise having taken oil in their vessels, were in readiness " when at midnight there was a cry made, behold the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." Whereas the foolish, having neglected to prepare for the event, when they afterward came, saying, " Lord, Lord, open unto us," received the reply, " Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Also the three servants, to one of whom were given five talents, to another two, to another one, were placed on probation ; and when their term was expired, their lord came to reckon with them. The two former had been faithful to their trust, and had gained as much as had been committed to them ; to each of whom his lord said, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ;

enter thou into the joy of thy lord." But the other servant, under pretence that his lord was severe and oppressive, went and hid his talent in the earth; and when his lord came to reckon with him, said, "Lo there thou hast that is thine." To whom his lord justly replied, "Thou wicked and slothful servant;" and commanded, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What instruction did our Saviour design to communicate by these parables, except that mankind are put on trial, and that when the term of probation shall have passed, they will be rewarded or punished according as they shall have been faithful or unfaithful?

Likewise, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus was evidently designed to convey the same instruction. The rich man employed his treasures to gratify his pride and voluptuousness; he was hard-hearted and unmerciful. He regarded not the cry of poverty and distress. Lazarus was afflicted with poverty and disease, but possessed qualifications for heaven. He died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Their lifetime was the season of their probation. They received their retribution in eternity. To the rich man, when he said, "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame;" Abraham replied, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."

Another comparison which is employed in the Scriptures, is that of the Olympic games; in which comparison, the motive presented to man to be faithful, zealous, and persevering in the service of Christ, is likened to that which influenced the competitors in those games. The apostle says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Again, "Know ye not that they who run a race run all, but one obtaineth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." But when will the faithful receive that crown? The same apostle informs us when he says, "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." This shows the reason why he said at another time, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." He believed in accordance with the Lord's parables which have been considered, that this is the season of man's probation, and that in eternity he will receive his corresponding reward.

IV. The promises, invitations, and warnings, to induce men to accede to the terms of the gospel, imply that this life is a season of probation for eternity. The promises and their conditions are comprised in the following examples: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." These conditions and promises imply that mankind are sinners, that they have forfeited eternal life, and are justly condemned. Compliance with these conditions is required of men in this life. The promises can be fulfilled only in eternity. The enjoyment of eternal life implies eternal duration. Every person, therefore, to whom the gospel is made known, is in a state of trial in respect to its terms. It is to be decided whether he will accede to them or not; and whether he shall receive remission of sins and eternal life or not. The probation is in this life, and it is for eternity.

The invitations of the gospel imply the same. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This invitation is tendered to those living in this world. The salvation which men need, and which is offered them in the gospel, is deliverance from the curse of the law, which is eternal punishment. Another invitation is, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." This also is addressed to men in the present life, while the blessing offered is everlasting. The sum of the invitations of the gospel is, Come now with believing hearts to Christ and accept salvation and eternal life: behold now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation.

The same doctrine is implied in the warnings of Scripture. In the following language addressed to those who had rejected divine mercy, God presents solemn warning to others: "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded: but ye have set at naught my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Is not this a warning to all not to slight the calls, and not to reject the offers of God's mercy, lest remediless woe come upon them? Our Saviour says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Again, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." He thus warns sinners of the loss which they will sustain, and the fearful judgment which will come upon them in eternity, if they persist in unbelief. Not to see life, is to be excluded from heaven; to be damned, is to be doomed to hell.

V. What the Scriptures teach respecting a judgment and future retributions, implies that this life is a season of probation for eternity. It is written, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Again, "Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In these passages we are taught, that God has appointed a day of judgment: that Christ will be the judge: that all men shall appear before his judgment-seat: that every one will be judged according to the things done in his body: and that he will receive retribution according to his deeds whether they be good or bad. That day is yet to come. We have not yet witnessed it; but all are to have a part in its transactions. We are now forming characters in which we must appear before our Judge, and receive our respective sentences in accordance with them. We are now on trial as the accountable subjects of God's moral government. Life and death are set before us. The narrow way which leads to life and the broad way which leads to destruction are the only alternatives as to our moral course. We are pursuing either the former or the latter; and according to the choice in which we persevere, will be the sentence pronounced upon us by our final Judge. To the righteous the Divine Judge will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They shall dwell in mansions which Christ has prepared for them. They will stand before the throne of God and serve him in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any hurt; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. But to the wicked the Judge will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." God will render them indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. They will be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Such are the retributions which the Word of God affirms await the righteous and the wicked respectively. Are these retributions experienced in this life? From their nature and duration it is evident they cannot be. The righteous cannot here

dwell in heavenly mansions. It is not their condition here neither to hunger nor thirst or to have all tears wiped from their eyes. They cannot here enjoy eternal life, nor shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Nor of the wicked is it true, that in this life they go away into everlasting punishment; that they are cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, nor that the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever.

But if these retributions are not experienced in this life, they will be in eternity. They will be experienced after the judgment-day. Previously to that day, that is, in this life, mankind are preparing for them. According to the moral character which we severally form, each of us will enter into eternal life or into eternal punishment.

Some inferences which naturally flow from this doctrine claim attention.

1. Since this life is a season of probation for eternity, the present dispensations of Providence are not judicial retributions. The order of events which the Scriptures describe respecting men as accountable creatures, is, that they first occupy the time given them for their probationary agency; then they are called to judgment before the Divine tribunal; and finally they receive their appropriate reward or punishment. That God's providential dealings with men in this life are not judicial retributions, is evident from the fact that the righteous and the wicked enjoy many blessings in common. God "makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He opens his liberal hand and dispenses a profusion of blessings in which both classes equally participate. The Psalmist in seeing the condition of some of his wicked contemporaries, was envious at their prosperity, that they were not in trouble as other men, and had blessings more than heart could wish. In the wicked cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida mighty works were done; and the guilty inhabitants of Capernaum were in point of religious privileges exalted to heaven, while they deserved to be thrust down to hell. Such manifestations of divine goodness to the wicked are not deserved retributions. The wicked deserve not the least of the Divine favors. Since the moral conduct of men, while they remain impenitent, is sinful and void of holiness, it is inconsistent to regard the blessings which they enjoy as constituting a reward.

But in what light ought we to view the temporal evils which the wicked suffer? It may be said that these evils, wholly or in part, are the result of moral laws, and are incidental to the present condition of mankind. Still, they are referable to the providential government of God, and are apportioned according to his pleasure. They are denominated punishments. When individuals are visited

with distressing dispensations it is scriptural to say, that God punishes them. "Wherefore," says the prophet, "does a living man complain for the punishment of his sins?" But punishment is not necessarily judicial. It is sometimes disciplinary or corrective. It may be designed as chastisement and restraint, or as a motive to repentance. When God afflicts the wicked they ought to humble themselves under his mighty hand, and be profited by the rod of correction. When God says, "Why will ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more;" it is implied, that they pervert the proper end of present judgments, while they ought to be led by them to repentance. Also the afflictions which God brings upon the righteous are of the nature of parental discipline. It is written, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." The exhortation which speaketh unto the Christian is, "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked by him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

All God's dispensations toward men in this life, whether for the present joyous or grievous, are adapted to them as being in a state of probation and not of retribution. They are of the character not of judicial retribution, but of parental discipline. Reward and punishment, in the judicial sense, succeed the judgment and belong to the things which are unseen and eternal.

2. Since this life is a season of probation for eternity, the long-suffering of God is manifest in his dealings with the wicked. If, as some suppose, this life were a season of retribution in such a sense that men receive the full measure of their deserts here, Divine long-suffering would be excluded. Long-suffering implies endurance of provocation, while punishment for the offence is suspended. But God assures us in his Word that he is a long-suffering God, and that he endures with much long-suffering his sinful creatures on earth. And since men are in a state of probation and do not receive judicial retribution for their conduct in this life, it is manifest that he exercises long-suffering in a great degree in his dispensations toward them. The apostle, referring to the apparent delay of God in the consummation of temporal things, ascribes it to his long-suffering: and he exhorts his brethren "to account that the long-suffering our Lord is salvation." It affords sinners opportunity for repentance and securing by faith an interest in Christ. All the time that he waits to be gracious unto sinners—every day and week and year, by which he protracts the season of their probation, is the time of his long-suffering. He not only endures their transgressions and their rejection of his mercy, without punishing them as they deserve; but he bestows upon them innumerable blessings, grants them precious privileges,

sets before them the strongest inducements to repent, strives with them by his Spirit, and with paternal tenderness says to them, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Or as their Saviour he compassionates them, as when he beheld the city and wept over it, and exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Let the impenitent be assured, that the continuance of their season of probation, their privileges, the invitations of the gospel, and all the expressions of the Divine goodness and mercy which they receive, are to be ascribed to the long-suffering of God. But let them beware lest they abuse it to their remediless injury. It may not, it will not, if they continue practically to despise it, prove their salvation; because the apostle says, "What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." Fearful it is to despise the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering.

3. Since this life is a season of probation for eternity, every person is continually rendering himself either a vessel of mercy, or a vessel of wrath. The faithful and devoted Christian derives benefit from the means of grace. By Divine sanctification through the truth and ordinances of the gospel, he is changed into the image of Christ. When he passes through scenes of affliction and conflict, his graces are improved. He has occasion to glory in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. By his work of faith and labor of love; by his effectual and fervent prayers; by his persevering zeal; self-denial for Christ's sake, and holy conversation, he is forming a character of growing meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. His path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But the sinner, as long as he continues to cherish the love of sin and refuses to repent, adds iniquity to iniquity. As God deigns to bestow upon him the blessings of his providence and to grant him the means of grace, his obligations are ever increasing, and by violating them his sins are daily growing in number and aggravation. He is continually resisting divine light, practically despising the invitations of the gospel, and neglecting the great salvation. Accordingly, he abuses the season of his probation and all his religious privileges, by treasuring up wrath against the

day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Either this character, or that of the believer, every person is forming. The season of probation is to men of different characters, as the fertile soil and the genial climate are to the good tree and the corrupt one; causing the good tree to strike deeper and stronger its roots, to spread wider its branches, and to bear an increasing abundance of good fruit; while the same effect is produced in the corrupt tree, except that its fruit is evil. The only remedy for the sinner is to become a new creature in Christ.

4. Since this life is a season of probation for eternity, time is of immense value. If it could be occupied for no more important end than to gain earthly good, to get worldly riches and honors, even to secure the possession of a throne, a crown, an empire, it would not be sacrilege to waste it. But, as a season of probation for eternity, it is sacred. Like the interests of the soul which depend on the right use of it, it is invaluable. It cannot be abused or wasted, except with loss or damage which will be felt through all eternity. A right use of it will be proportionally happy in its consequences. The Christian by occupying it in obeying the gospel, obtains salvation and eternal life. By faithful continuance in well-doing, he secures glory, honor, and a blessed immortality. He lays up a treasure in heaven. The more faithfully he improves his time, the greater will be the value of his heavenly treasure, the richer his reward: because every one will receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. But the Christian is liable to make an unprofitable or perverted use of time; and when he does, he suffers loss—loss which can never be repaired. His reward will be in eternity less than it otherwise would have been. To every Christian, therefore, every portion of his probationary season, whether rightly employed or perverted, is of inestimable consequence. But to the impenitent sinner time is no less valuable. The consequences of his past abuse of it involve evil from which nothing can deliver him but the blood of Christ. His destiny in respect to two worlds, both eternal, is to be decided; it is in the remaining part only of the season of his probation in which he is to make the decision. He who can estimate the importance of being saved from eternal woe, and of inheriting eternal life, can appreciate that remaining in time. Yet it may be only a day, an hour, a moment.

“Moment by moment years are past,
And one ere long will be our last.
'Twixt that, long fled, which gave us light,
And that, which soon shall end in night,
There is a point no eye can see,
Yet on it hangs eternity.”

That point of time will result in the eternal salvation and happiness of the sinner, which is the moment when he seasonably begins to repent and be reconciled to God, or to trust in Christ. Or if the sinner neglects to do this, that point of time will result in his eternal perdition, which is the last moment in which he might have seasonably begun to pursue the way to heaven, but refused to do it. Oh, with what regret and anguish will the lost sinner reflect on abused time—not only the last moment in which he might have made his peace with God, but all the years, the weeks, the desecrated Sabbaths, which shall have filled up the season of his probation!

In conclusion—Since this life is a season of probation for eternity, the condition of those who hear the gospel preached is solemn and interesting.—If you have received the truth in faith and love: if you have acceded to the terms of the gospel, and thus secured an interest in its promises, that event which will terminate the season of your probation, will introduce you to the mansions of the blessed, where you will enjoy the presence, behold the glory, and participate in the everlasting love of your blessed Redeemer. But in the mean time let it be your aim to perform with fidelity the service which he requires of you. He has committed to you talents, and he requires you to occupy till he come. So live that you may adorn his doctrine, recommend his holy religion, and honor his name. While life lasts the season of your probation continues, and your conduct will affect your eternal condition. Great is your reward in heaven! But it will be more or less great, according to the degree of your faithfulness. Especially consider the infinite worthiness of your Lord and the preciousness of his cause, and realize the obligations which you are under to him.

But the reflection that this life is a season of probation for eternity is unspeakably solemn to you who have not obeyed the gospel. There is danger that the preaching of the gospel will ultimately be to you a savor of death unto death. It will unavoidably be so, if you abuse the remainder of the season of your probation as you have the past. That remainder consists of fleeting time. It may be a short, a very short space. Whether you are aged or young, your probationary term may soon expire. Oh, beware lest you have occasion to lament at last that the accepted time and the day of salvation have forever closed: "That the harvest is past, the summer ended and you are not saved."

ABUSE OF CHASTISEMENTS.—BY THE EDITOR.

If afflictions do not subdue and reclaim, there is nothing like them to confirm men in their evil ways, and render them hopeless. They will break the spirit of rebellion and bow us in penitence, or so sear the conscience and deaden all moral sensibility as that nothing can alarm or make an impression. And hence, the Lord not unrequently ceases to chastise the guilty, for the simple reason that they will only "revolt more and more." He has used the rod upon them in vain. He has rebuked and chastised till the discipline has become an injury and not a benefit, and then in righteous anger he gives them over as incorrigible. And when a man or a nation gets into so obdurate a state as that afflictions fail of their chief end, we may well despair of their salvation.

The judgments of God in this world are no doubt mainly disciplinary. They are visited upon men in mercy and not in wrath; they are a Father's chastisements, and not the awards of a Lawgiver. They are meant to deter men from further sinning, or to reclaim them from evil ways into which they have fallen, or to soften the heart and prepare the way for more signal blessings. They are chosen to this end, and wisely adapted in their particular nature and time and manner of visitation, to secure it. They are means in the hands of God, of precaution, correction, reformation, obedience, and even growth in grace. They are effectual often, we know, when mercies have failed to win; when the goodness of God is all lost upon us; when the Spirit, operating through gentle means, has failed to accomplish toward us God's merciful designs.

But alas! how many brave out the judgments, as well as pervert and abuse the mercies of God! They despise reproof, and wax worse and worse under the discipline of the rod, however mercifully and severely employed. They are made to feel the wrath of God on account of their sins, and yet they will not give them up. One after another, he takes away their friends by death, and still they are unyielding. He ruins their fortunes, and disappoints all their earthly hopes, and reduces them to poverty, and yet they hold out, and only murmur in sullenness and despair. He lays his hand upon their persons, and takes away their strength, and brings them down to the borders of the grave, but so far gone are they in evil, that with death hanging over them, and their fears, it may be, very much alarmed, they will not repent and give glory to God. He lifts over our cities, and over our borders, the sword of the destroying angel, and thousands fall on every side; but they will not learn righteousness; even in their distress they will not acknowledge and seek God. And then the Lord God takes

them away with a stroke of his vengeance, or, giving them up as past recovery, leaves them to their chosen ways, to fill up the measure of their iniquities. This is the melancholy experience of millions of individual sinners, and of not a few families, cities, and nations. The Lord chastises till his chastisements, like his mercies, tend only to evil—embitter the spirit—harden the heart into adamant—sear the conscience—and arm the soul to make a more desperate resistance; and then, weary of chastising, and weary of the blindness, and hardness, and fault-finding, and blaspheming of the miserable and guilty beings who are proof alike against mercy and judgment, love and wrath, he pronounces their doom: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

When a man has grown so bad that no trial, affliction, or threatening seems to make him better, but only worse (which afflictions never fail to do if they do not humble and convert the soul) he is in extreme peril; and the removal of the rod is but the proof of his *abandonment* to the work and doom of his transgression. He has reached a point at which Hope turns back, and beyond which no goodness wins, or wrath or judgment restrains. What shall reclaim such an one? Past mercies have only made him forgetful of God. Past judgments—it may be made severe, and oft-repeated—have only made him more rebellious than ever before. And having passed through so much affliction, and grown worse continually, what, short of death and the thunder of final judgment, shall open his eyes and make him feel? So with families. If God visits a family with sore and repeated afflictions, and yet they will not call upon him or amend their ways, that house "is nigh unto cursing;" and though he may forbear for the present, and smile on them in his providence, he will, when his own good time has come, pour out his "fury" upon it. The same is true of nations. So long as judgments, threatened or executed, have a *good* effect upon the moral sentiments and feelings and conduct of a people, we have reason to expect that God will hold over them the rod, and inflict it just as often and just as severely as is necessary to gain their attention, correct their errors, and fit them to profit by his blessings. But nations have often, like Israel and Egypt, so rebelled against chastisements, peculiar and decisive, that in righteous anger God has withheld the rod, and left them to the dominion of pride, luxury, lust, unbelief, and every evil thing which they desired, and thus their prosperity has proved a snare, and their unrestrained indulgence brought slow but sure and utter ruin upon them, in the ordinary course of things; or, provoked beyond endurance, he has by one terrible stroke of judicial vengeance, blotted them from the map of nations.

In these times of severe judgments, when God has seemed to "come out of his place," to rebuke and chastise the earth; when war, famine, and pestilence, the chief instruments of his

punishment, have combined their force and terror to afflict our race, it becomes every man, every family, every church, and nation, to inquire : " Are these judgments of Almighty God disciplinary or retributive ? Have we reason to think they are ordered in mercy or unmixed wrath, after mercies have failed and milder means proved fruitless ? Are they doing for us and upon us the works of mercy—abasing our souls in the dust before the offended Majesty of Heaven, inducing repentance and forsaking of sin, and constraining the exercise of prayer ;—or are they doing the work of wrath, only serving to sink us into a state of greatly increased insensibility and profligacy ?

To sin with a hard and unbelieving heart under such a visitation as the nation and the world have just received from the hands of God, is to defy him in the terribleness of his power and rush madly upon destruction. Sinners who remain stupid and unconverted through such seasons of trial, will have occasion to take up a doleful lamentation over their eternal prospects. Greatly do we fear, that thousands will so have hardened their hearts in the day of our recent rebuke and peril, and will so quickly and thoroughly relapse into all their evil practices from which fear may have deterred them for a little season, as that no means nor motives shall hereafter have any power to bring them to repentance. At the close of this year of startling and terrible chastisement, the insulted and set at naught Jehovah will say of them, in mingled grief and anger : " Why should ye be stricken any more ? Ye will revolt more and more."